UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/50/672
24 October 1995
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH/FRENCH

Fiftieth session
Agenda item 110

PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

Concrete measures taken to alleviate the situation of children in armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The General Assembly in paragraph 6 of its resolution 49/209 of 23 December 1994 on protection of children affected by armed conflicts, took note of the note by the Secretary-General on concrete measures taken to alleviate the situation of children in armed conflicts. 1/ In paragraph 7, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the concrete measures which had been taken to alleviate the situation of children in armed conflicts, based on the information to be provided by Member States and United Nations bodies and organizations, as well as by other relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

2. After the preparation of the document, the Secretary-General received replies from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Movement of Mothers, containing information relating to the situation of children affected by armed conflicts, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/157 of 20 December 1993.

3. A summary of those replies is reproduced below.

United Nations Children's Fund

[Original: English]

[26 August 1994]

1. UNICEF is particularly concerned about the involvement of children in armed conflict, and has addressed this issue in a number of forums - most recently raising concerns about the devastation caused to innocent victims by land mines.

2. It is also clear from discussions which UNICEF held with leaders and elders of various religions prior to the World Conference on Human Rights, that none of these leaders condoned, nor felt there was any justification, religious or otherwise, for the involvement of children in armed conflict.

3. UNICEF activities in countries embroiled in armed conflict have recognized the need to focus programme initiatives on addressing the psychological effects of trauma and the need to assist children and young people to reintegrate into society.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

[Original: English]

[2 September 1994]

1. Currently, more than half the world's refugee population is made up of children. It is estimated that they number approximately 10 million. Within its mandate, UNHCR is particularly concerned about refugee children who are in special need of protection. This Office has participated in the activities described herein, in relation to the protection of refugee children involved in situations of armed conflict.

2. The mandate of UNHCR is to provide international protection to refugees, including refugee children, and to seek durable solutions to their problems. Incidents of military recruitment of refugee children continue to impair their protection in countries of asylum and also has longer-term potential protection consequences for their ability to repatriate satisfactorily to their country of origin. UNHCR has brought the problems of abuse of children, including forced conscription, to the attention of its representatives through a variety of initiatives.

3. The Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme has devoted considerable attention to this problem, and has adopted conclusions 1987 No. 47 (XXXVIII) and 1989 No. 59 (XL), both on refugee children. These conclusions have been brought to the attention of UNHCR officers in the field and at headquarters.

4. In addition, the issue of physical security and military recruitment of refugee children is covered in the newly revised UNHCR Guidelines on Protection and Care of Refugee Children, providing guidance to field officers and

cooperating non-governmental organizations (NGOs) when confronted with the problem. The Guidelines describe UNHCR objectives when assisting refugee children as including their protection against "detention, armed conflict, military recruitment, sexual assault or abuse, prostitution, torture, hazardous working conditions or any other form of violence, abuse or neglect".

5. UNHCR is aware of instances of military recruitment of unaccompanied minors. In those cases UNHCR representatives in the field have referred to article 38.2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child when drawing the attention of the relevant authorities to their responsibilities to prevent military conscription of children.

6. UNHCR strongly supports, as a timely and positive step, the initiative taken by the Committee on the Rights of the Child for an additional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in relation to the military recruitment of children. This Office firmly agrees that children who have not yet attained 18 years of age should be fully protected from military recruitment and participation in hostilities.

World Movement of Mothers

[Original: French]

[30 September 1994]

1. The Movement's working group on the protection of children in international and national conflicts, and from all forms of violence, composed of 17 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) associated with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), was established in 1980. Since then the Movement has collaborated with a number of international organizations similarly concerned by that problem including Amnesty International, the World Veterans Federation, La Voix de l'Enfant, Handicap International, UNICEF, UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the UNESCO National Commissions, Refugees International and Vivre. On the basis of its experience, the Movement therefore wishes to submit a number of proposals.

2. With regard to paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 48/157 of 20 December 1993, while endorsing the presence of an expert, the Movement believes it would be useful to mobilize local specialists, if necessary NGOs, without waiting for the results of the various studies under way. The problem is too urgent a problem to admit of any delay. Let us appeal to the to spirit of good will while waiting for the expert's report.

3. In order to inform the greatest number of people about the dangers of anti-personnel mines, a large-scale information campaign (radio broadcasts, posters, drawings), in the languages of the countries in question, might be in order.

4. Second additional protocol. The Movement favours a review of the Protocol II, as provided for under the Geneva Convention. Anti-personnel mines

are classified as excessively injurious weapons. Their victims are mainly civilians, children in particular. It is urgent that greater resources be allocated for mine clearance efforts.

5. Education and rehabilitation of child victims of war. The Movement has conducted through its national branches a survey of the education and rehabilitation of child soldiers, or "passive" victims of conflict. While a limited number of countries, aided by UNESCO and certain NGOs, have been able to set up experimental educational units, most countries urgently need assistance to establish the necessary special facilities. Aid to children traumatized by war is clearly an absolute priority - today for humanitarian reasons, and tomorrow to preserve democracy.

Notes

1/ A/49/411.